

# Sebastian Sentinel



## Principal's Message

Dear Eagle Families,

As we approach the end of this school year, it's a moment for both reflection and anticipation. We've warmly welcomed new faculty and students while maintaining our commitment to providing enriching learning experiences. From vibrant music concerts to captivating STEM activities, from engaging clubs to the thrill of Gradventure, the school year has been filled with memorable events. Spring Fling and the Eighth Grade Dance, organized by the PTO, were highlights, as were our festivals, which brought immense joy and excitement to our students.

Looking ahead to the summer, we're thrilled to announce the return of our free rising 6th grade STEAM camp. This 3-day program not only introduces new students to the principles of STEAM but also fosters connections within our school community. It's a time for us to engage with our incoming students on a personal level, setting the stage for their success.

While our students enjoy their summer break, our teachers eagerly anticipate professional development opportunities to enhance their teaching practices. We remain dedicated to expanding our knowledge base with effective strategies, ensuring that we continue to nurture thoughtful, creative, and engaged learners.

Central to our mission is the cultivation of a positive school culture. We are committed to reinforcing consistent expectations and teaching essential routines that foster good learning habits. Emphasizing kindness and respect towards others and oneself, we will review these principles multiple times during the first week of school. We encourage you to explore the document online and discuss it with your children, as it forms the foundation of our collective journey towards excellence and stellar character.

As we bid farewell to another academic year, I wish you all a summer filled with relaxation and cherished moments with your families.

Yours in Partnership,  
Kirstie Gabaldon

If you aren't on our mailing list, please check out Ms. Gabaldon's weekly updates by clicking on the Principal's Message on the Sebastian Website.  
<https://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/principals-message/>



\*Please watch for our next newsletter in October 2024, and bi-weekly electronic news updates.

## Sebastian Middle School

2955 Lewis Speedway  
St. Augustine, FL 32084

**904-547-3840**

**Kirstie Gabaldon**  
*Principal*

**Jennifer Gamble**  
*Assistant Principal*

**Kevin Hayes**  
*Dean*

**Recia Smith**  
*Instructional Literacy Coach*

**Frankie Portelos**  
*STEM Coach*

**Amy Borie**  
*Testing Coordinator*

### Vision

At Sebastian Middle School, all students will achieve personal success in their learning and become responsible and productive citizens.

### Mission

In order to prepare our students to live in and contribute to a changing world, Sebastian will provide a balanced, varied school curriculum designed to meet the academic, cultural and social needs of individuals from the diverse backgrounds of our community.

## MAY 2024

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**Sebastian Sentinel**

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Issue 3

# Sebastian Middle School Website

The SMS website has up to date information that is important to stay informed about all activities at Sebastian.

It can be found at:

<https://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/>



  
 HAC

  
 Calendar

  
 Payments

🔍



## Art Show



Leah Redick won 2nd place in mixed media in the St. Johns County middle school art show!



Opal Ferreira



Morgan Hashagen



Louis Cook

Unfortunately, we can't post all of the entrants. Delilah Schmidt, Riley Glidewell and Lily Usina also submitted entries.

Also check out the Art Dept webpage for Stop Motion Videos our students did in Art Classes this past month. Students wrote the story, designed the set, filmed and edited, adding sound effects and music. <https://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/art/>.

## Do Not Wait Until the Last Minute!

Rising 7th graders are required by Florida law to obtain a Tdap vaccination before entering 7th grade. An updated DH 680 form to include Tdap vaccination, must be obtained and submitted to the school before your student can start on the first day of school in St. Johns County School District on Monday, August 12th, 2024. If you have a religious exemption filed through the DOH, please notify the school and/or provide us a copy of the exemption. The Tdap vaccination can be scheduled at no cost through the St. Johns County Department of Health. You can also schedule for this immunization at your pediatrician's office.



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# PTO

As we wrap up another successful school year at Sebastian Middle, we want to take a moment to express our immense gratitude to each and every parent for their unwavering support, time, and talents. Your involvement has been instrumental in enriching our educational environment and enhancing the experiences of our students and staff.

We also extend our deepest thanks to our generous business partners whose contributions have been vital to our successes this year. Your dedication and support are greatly appreciated by our entire school community.

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As we head into the summer, we wish all our families and partners a wonderful and relaxing break. We look forward to welcoming you back next year, refreshed and ready for new adventures.

Have a great summer!

Your SMS PTO Board

Claudia Dencer, Cara Shaw, Shellie Joyner, Shawna LeMaire, Jen Farrow, Shawna Erwin and Jossy Taylor.

## 8th Grade Celebrations

We celebrated the 8th graders this year with the following activities:

**8th Grade Celebration!**

- May 11 - Gradventure
- May 17 - 8th Grade Dance 6.30pm
- May 20 - yearbook signing and donuts period 1
- May 21 - 8th Grade Awards Ceremony 6:00pm
- May 22 - Ice cream on the patio - lunch

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# STEM - 8th graders are doing the "Paper Airplane Challenge!"

In this lesson, we will fold and adjust 3 paper airplanes to try and make them fly as far as possible.

- The first airplane will be a basic paper plane design.
- For the second airplane, students will watch the "Science Max" video and build the Guinness World Record paper airplane.
- The third airplane is a world record airplane called "Suzanne" designed by John Collins. John Collins says that people think they don't know how to fold a good paper airplane, but they are WRONG. They just don't know how to ADJUST a paper airplane!

Eighth graders will build each paper airplane, test each once, make changes to each airplane, and throw them again for a second test run to see how their changes influenced the flights. During the process, students will record their data: distance, observations, and changes.



Eighth Graders also spent the first weeks of May designing, building, and painting rockets.



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# Media Center

The Media Center celebrated its annual Reading Recognition Day with some of its star readers on Friday, April 26, 2024. Students were treated with a visit from Sallie Anne Rodriguez, author of *Treasure Tracks*, a Sunshine State Young Readers Award winning novel. Ms. Rodriguez's visit and the lunch for the author and students were made possible through a grant from Sebastian's PTO. Students were also treated with pizza from Five Star and cake. Several students received a personally signed copy of *Treasure Tracks*. Ms. Rodriguez spoke to the students about her writing process, Florida history (the novel is set in south Florida) and answered questions from the students. Our Access Unit students also presented Ms. Rodriguez with a game that they created based on her novel.

After the visit, students watched the Teachers vs. Students Battle of the Books. Members of Sebastian's Battle of the Books team competed against the teachers: Ms. Cody, Ms. Harvey, Ms. Morris, and Ms. Sims. Students and teachers had to familiarize themselves with the 23-24 SSYRA novels in order to battle it out. After three tough rounds and much cheering from students and teachers, the teachers came out as the victors.

The day ended with popcorn and the Eagle's Nest. It was a great day had by these star readers! The most recent Media Center News can be found here: <https://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/>.



The ESE Access Unit made a game based on author, Sallie Anne Rodriguez's book -*Treasure Tracks*. This is an exciting story about a 12-year-old that searched for treasure. Janine Deitz, one of SMS students, says she "Loves the twists and turns" the story gives. We read the novel and created a board game. We used the 3D printer to take elements from the story and decorated the board. Mrs. Rodriguez loved the game so much she referenced it many times during her presentation. WAY TO GO!



The 2024-2025 list for the Sunshine State Young Reader's Award books is out. Start reading these books during the summer to earn prizes from the Media Center. Also, if you are looking for summer reading activities, check out the St. Johns County Public Library and Barnes and Noble for summer reading incentives. Students can earn free books just for reading. See the complete list <https://www-sms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/media/>.




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## NJHS

The NJHS Fundraiser for Bags of Happiness was a huge hit with the students! There were 150 bags distributed to students in all grade levels. As the result of many generous donors paying kindness forward, we were able to reach so many more students than we expected!

The NJHS would like to thank everyone who assisted in getting this project completed. It took many helping hands: Thank you, Ms. Gabaldon for letting us do the project! Thank you, Ms. Conrad for putting the project on our school website/school pay, supplying the weekly sales report so we could have an accurate count of bags needed and printing the cards! Thank you to the guidance department and teachers for giving us all the names of students you thought could use bag! Thank you, Ms. Solana for posting the information on our electric board out front and being sure we got the supplies we needed on time! Thank you, Ms. Harvey (our wonderful custodian) who suggested some flair and style to our bag design. Thank you, Mr. Kassay, for helping stuff the bags. Thank you, Ms. Dencer, for promoting the activity through the PTO, and thank you Ms. Ridilla (our NJHS sponsor) for encouraging us with our idea, helping us pick out all the items that went in the bags and stuffing/distributing them!

## The ESE Garden has been Harvested!

This year we planted so many healthy and yummy vegetables. The garden has helped engaging students in a life skill while promoting healthy lifestyles. We learned the price difference in buying and growing our own vegetables. The students learned how to maintain a garden and what plants need to survive and thrive. Many delicious snacks were prepared with the produce we harvested, including kale chips, potatoes with onion and green pepper, and all seasoned with herbs from our garden. We have been working in and learning lessons from garden all year and can't wait to see what we will plant next year!



**Perry D. Unwalla, Supporting Students, Staff and the Community of Sebastian Middle School.**

*Go Sebastian  
Eagles!*



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# Dive In! Middle School Fishing Club Goes High-Tech with Underwater Drone

Forget your grandfather's cane pole! Sebastian Middle School's new fishing club is casting a net into the future by incorporating science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) into their watery pastime. The school's STEM coach, Frankie Portelos, and several 8th graders started the club that meets during lunch. It's a pilot program that looks to expand and incorporate the other grades next year.

Traditionally, fishing clubs focus on bait, tackle, and technique. This club, however, is adding a whole new dimension by integrating STEM principles. There is a retention pond on campus that the club uses. There is a fence around the perimeter and the students and Sebastian's STEM coach stay on one side for safety. You never know what is lurking in Florida's waters.

Students learn about robotics and underwater camera systems as they operate their very own underwater drone. These drones navigate the hidden world beneath the waves, giving anglers a real-time view of fish location, habitat structure, and water conditions – crucial information for making informed decisions and minimizing wasted casts.

But the benefits extend far beyond catching the biggest bass. By analyzing the data collected by their drone, students are gaining valuable insights into the local marine environment. They can track fish populations, monitor water quality, and even map underwater terrain. This data can then be shared with local conservation groups, contributing to a better understanding of the delicate balance of the aquatic ecosystem.

Operating and maintaining these underwater drones requires a working knowledge of various STEM fields. Students delve into the principles of buoyancy, propulsion, and underwater communication as they pilot their drones. They first needed to overcome a large hurdle. How do we get the drone into the water over a fence safely. Many different attempts were made that could not safely and securely drop the drone into the water. Finally, they used another robotic mechanism that rolled on the ground and drop the drone safely into the water. With these issues, the students also gain practical skills in troubleshooting, problem-solving, and critical thinking – all essential for success in any scientific endeavor.

This unique approach to fishing is not only educational but also fosters a sense of camaraderie and teamwork among club members.



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# Sebastian Sentinel



**Sebastian Middle School**

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## Incoming 9th Grade SAHS Summer Reading Info

Summer Reading Assignment 2024 for incoming 9th Graders will be posted on the SAHS website towards the end of May. Please check there for information.

### 2024-2025 Calendar (partial)

Monday	August 12, 2024	Students Report to Class
Monday	September 2, 2024	Labor Day- Student/Teacher Holiday ✓
Friday	September 20, 2024	Teacher Inservice Day- Student Holiday✓
Friday	October 11, 2024	First Quarter Ends
Monday	October 14, 2024	Teacher Planning Day-Student Holiday ✓
Monday	November 11, 2024	Veterans Day - Student/Teacher Holiday ✓
Monday - Friday	November 25-29, 2024	Thanksgiving Break - Student/Teacher Holiday *
Friday	December 20, 2024	Second Quarter/First Semester Ends *
Monday - Thursday	Dec. 23, 2024-Jan. 2, 2025	Winter Break - Student/Teacher Holiday

\*ALL Schools will be dismissed 1 hour early on Dec 20, 2024 and May 30, 2025

All Schools participate in a weekly early release on Wednesday: Elementary @1:45, Middle @12:50, High @ 2:50